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Chapter 3

CORE STRATEGIC AND GENERAL POLICIES

3.1 This chapter expresses the Local Plan Strategy through a set of Core Policies. It also includes a number of general policies which are relevant to more than one type of land use.

General Sustainable Development

3.2 Sustainable development is one of the core principles underpinning the planning system. The Government set out four aims for sustainable development in its strategy 'A Better Quality of Life – A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK'. These have been carried forward into the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' and PPS1. These aims include:

- Social inclusion and cohesion;
- Protection and enhancement of the environment;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Sustainable economic development.

3.3 Government advice reflects a commitment to sustainable development and makes it clear that the environment should be considered throughout the Development Plan process. Development Plans should, therefore, not just consider the familiar issues of landscape, nature conservation and the historic and built environment, but should also be concerned with environmental issues which are long term and irreversible, such as global warming and the consumption of non-renewable resources. The Local Plan has an important role to play in achieving sustainable development through its influence in controlling and guiding land use patterns and protecting environmental assets. The District's main environmental assets, as referred to in Policy SG1, are described in greater detail in Chapter 2.

3.4 The Plan seeks to balance demands for a finite quantity of land. This is reflected in the strategy of concentrating most new development in the towns, of ensuring the full and effective use of unused, underused or derelict land and buildings within defined settlement limits, in the prevention of urban sprawl, in maintaining the quality of the countryside, in minimising the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land to development and in minimising the need to travel.

3.5 The land and buildings within South Holland are a valuable resource. In the towns, villages and in the open countryside the effective use of land and buildings is of great importance. We want to preserve the quality of life within the District and to maintain a sustainable environment for residents and visitors to the District in the future. The more effective the use of land and buildings in the District the less the loss of greenfield sites to development.

3.6 The major advantage in the reuse or redevelopment of disused and underused buildings is the benefit to the visual amenity of the surrounding area. Such

buildings are often in a poor state of repair and this can affect the townscape or landscape quality of the surrounding area, increasing potential for crime and vandalism. In many cases the buildings are already serviced and their reuse can be considered a saving in infrastructure terms along with ongoing savings in materials. We recognise however that often a contributing factor to buildings falling into disuse or disrepair is the removal of their original use. In such cases support will be given for the conversion of buildings to be used in a different way in order to maximise existing investment, or for the redevelopment and reuse of land.

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- 3.7 In addition we are also aware of the contribution that some such sites make, in their present condition, as nature conservation locations within the District. Much derelict, disused and underused land supports a wide range of flora and fauna, developed over a period of years. In such cases we will support the use of such sites for nature conservation purposes or for the provision of informal open space, perhaps as part of a wider development proposal, ensuring the protection of the nature conservation value of the site in the longer term. This could include the promotion of habitat creation schemes as part of the proposal, which will contribute to wider biodiversity. We will encourage the use, reuse or redevelopment of derelict, disused and underused land and buildings within South Holland, where it does not prejudice the strategies and policies found elsewhere in this document.
- 3.8 This policy is a general sustainable development policy which reflects the District Council's commitment to these principles.

Policy SG1- General Sustainable Development

Planning permission for development will be granted where the Council is satisfied that the proposal is consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and where:

- 1) the quality of life for residents is unimpaired or enhanced;**
- 2) reasonable measures have been taken to conserve energy and natural resources; and**
- 3) South Holland's essential character and main environmental assets are not damaged.**

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Distribution Of Development

- 3.9 The spatial framework and hierarchy of development of Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS8) is reflected in the emerging replacement Lincolnshire Structure Plan which itself establishes in broad terms an approach to be undertaken within the District. The Local Plan aims to apply and set this strategy into a South Holland context, applying local considerations and objectives.
- 3.10 The most significant way in which the Local Plan can deliver its aims and objectives is in influencing the location of new development. The emphasis of the Plan is on directing new development towards the towns and villages of the District, increasing accessibility to services and facilities, maximising the use of brownfield land and protecting the countryside from unnecessary development, only allowing development which is essential in that location.

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In all other rural settlements (as shown on the proposals map) only a very limited amount of new development will be permitted and only in exceptional circumstances to meet demonstrated local needs and where the location of the development is well related to the built up area of the settlement.

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Agricultural Land And Development In The Countryside

- 3.29 It is important that the development of greenfield land, including the best and most versatile agricultural land is only allowed after all other opportunities to accommodate development on brownfield land and land within existing defined settlement limits has been assessed.
- 3.30 A Strategic Landscape Capacity Study was carried out for the District by John Campion Associates Ltd in 2003. The study defined 3 character areas, namely:
- Settled Fens;
 - Peaty Fens; and
 - The Wash Marshes.
- 3.31 The Study has been used in the preparation of SPG on Wind Energy (2003) and will be used in the decision making process. Development proposals that could result in an unacceptable impact upon the landscape character of an area either individually or cumulatively will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the need for the development in that location outweighs its impact and where it can be demonstrated that no other site or solution exists to accommodate the proposed development.
- 3.32 The landscape of the District contributes to the quality of its environment and is integral to the quality of life for residents and the economy. It is important it is protected and enhanced and that development proposals do not undermine its quality. The Council will therefore aim to ensure that the landscape is safeguarded for its own sake and to protect its intrinsic character and wildlife.

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- 3.33 The District comprises almost exclusively grades 1 and 2 agricultural land which is important nationally and for the local economy. The majority of economic activity in the district is either directly in agriculture or 'adding value' to agricultural produce in terms of processing, packaging and distribution. Nevertheless the economies of the agricultural industry are changing and PPS7 recognises the increasing importance to farmers of diversification into non-agricultural activities in order to supplement their farming incomes.
- 3.34 Therefore, this Local Plan seeks to minimise the loss of agricultural land, whilst also realising that it is essential to encourage rural enterprise, including the diversification of farm businesses. However, such diversification either individually or cumulatively should not lead to activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality, promote unacceptable increases in movements by motor vehicles or unacceptable impact on the character of the countryside. However, we do recognise that whilst the retention or creation of new jobs in rural areas may increase traffic in some areas it may reduce the overall mileage the rural population need to travel to find local work.
- 3.35 It is also important to make mention of the concept of 'managed re-alignment' of sea defences to protect the area from flooding. The House of Commons Committee on Agriculture has stated that the protection of high grade agricultural land should not be carried out at the expense of coastal sea defences. However, Government encourages a strategic approach for the appraisal of proposed flood defence schemes. All schemes must be technically sound, environmentally acceptable and

economically justified. Essentially Government seeks sustainable, best value for money investment solutions having regard to the protection of such environmentally important areas as the Wash. Government also suggests that consideration be given to both advancing and retarding the defence line.

- 3.36 The spatial strategy of the Plan seeks to concentrate new development in the towns and, to a lesser extent, selected villages. This strategy is concerned with protecting the countryside from sporadic development and avoiding the higher than average costs of infrastructure and service provision. In accordance with central government policy and the Structure Plan there is a presumption against development in the countryside other than for specified activities requiring a rural location.
- 3.37 Virtually all of our countryside consists of land classified as the best and most versatile agricultural land, and as such forms a part of a nationally important resource, to be safeguarded. The intensive cultivation of that land is of considerable importance to the local economy. Therefore, whilst the loss of some such land from agricultural production will be inevitable in this district, such loss must be carefully controlled. Prioritisation and phasing of development can help to retain land in agricultural production until it is actually required for building, but the development of high quality land in the countryside will only be permitted if there are no other suitable sites available.

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- 3.38 Development in the countryside is, therefore, allowed only in exceptional circumstances. Some types of use are appropriate in the countryside, principally those that are essentially rural in character including agriculture and forestry. Wildlife habitat creation may also be appropriate, especially where new wetlands are created in conjunction with changes to engineered flood defences.
- 3.39 As well as agriculture it is recognised that the countryside is likely to have an increasingly important role for recreation. Certain recreational facilities, such as golf courses, need extensive areas of land but generally preserve the openness of the countryside. These are particularly appropriate on the fringes of built up areas where they are easily accessible. Any building associated with these activities should be carefully located so that it is in sympathy with its rural setting.
- 3.40 Cemeteries are acceptable in the countryside, being large space users that are substantially open in character. Nature conservation activities are also appropriate to the countryside.
- 3.41 Development required for public utilities, including telecommunications may be essential in rural locations.
- 3.42 Petrol filling stations and other roadside services can also be appropriate development in the countryside where there is a gap in existing provision which cannot be met within built up areas.
- 3.43 In terms of diversifying the rural economy it is considered important to allow for new uses in existing buildings particularly for commercial, industrial, tourist or recreational purposes although ancillary residential use may be also acceptable. Diversification opportunities on farms can also include farm shops, craft centres, Pick Your Own, food processing, picnic sites, farm trails, fishing, pony trekking, growing crops for industrial use, organic farming, wood coppicing and growing organic food, much of which can be carried on without the need for planning permission. However, it is also important that development should not be unduly harmful to the rural character of its surroundings.
- 3.44 For the purposes of this Local Plan, 'countryside' or 'open countryside' means any location not included within defined settlement limits as shown on the proposals map.

Policy SG4 - Development in the Countryside

Planning permission will only be granted for development in the open countryside which is essential in the proposed location and cannot reasonably be accommodated within defined settlement limits. Development proposals that would result in an unacceptable impact upon the landscape character of an area, either individually or cumulatively, will only be permitted where:

- 1) the need for the development in that location outweighs its impact; and**
- 2) no other site or solution exists to accommodate the proposed development.**

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Policy SG5 - Non-Agricultural Development On Agricultural Land

Planning Permission will only be granted for the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) where:

- 1) land of a lower agricultural grade is not available to accommodate the proposed development;**
- 2) available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a wildlife, landscape or historic designation that outweighs agricultural considerations;**
- 3) the development is proposed on land of the lowest possible grade.**

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Community Infrastructure And Impact Assessment

- 3.45 Local Planning Authorities may seek the provision of, or contribution towards the provision of, community benefits deriving directly from development proposals in order to make them acceptable in land use terms. Developers must necessarily accept the financial consequences of their development.
- 3.46 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) enables local planning authorities to enter into legal agreements, sometimes called planning obligations, with developers and landowners. Planning obligations can only be sought where they meet all the following tests:
- necessary
 - relevant to planning
 - directly related to the development
 - fairly and reasonably related in scale to the proposed development
 - reasonable in all other respects.
- 3.47 Circular 05/2005 gives detailed advice on the form and content of planning obligations and it is stressed that such agreements must not be seen as 'purchasing planning permission'.

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- 3.48 Examples of what we could seek the provision of, where appropriate to the development proposed, include:

capacity to serve the development proposed. Applications for non-mains drainage will need to be accompanied by an appropriate drainage assessment that demonstrates that the development will be in accordance with this policy and Circular 3/99 'Planning Requirement in Respect of the Use of Non-Mains Sewerage incorporating Septic Tanks in New Development'.

- 3.74 Implementation of this policy shall require close liaison with the Council's environmental services and building control functions as well as consultation where necessary with Anglian Water, the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards.

Policy SG12 - Sewerage and Development

Proposals for development which would give rise to foul sewage discharge will only be granted planning permission if they include provision for its effective collection, treatment and disposal as follows:

- 1) new development shall be served by mains foul sewers and sewage treatment works, wherever the opportunity exists;**
- 2) where it is impracticable to provide mains foul sewerage (and if there are no works programmed which would enable such connection) development shall normally be served by a package treatment plant;**
- 3) septic tanks will only be acceptable as an alternative to package treatment plants where:**
 - (i) only a single dwelling or small group of dwellings is proposed, and**
 - (ii) ground conditions (in terms of the structure and drainage of the soil) are proven by the applicant to achieve long term acceptable levels of performance, and**
 - (iii) the plot is of sufficient size to provide an adequate subsoil drainage system.**

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Pollution And Contamination

- 3.75 The future occupiers and neighbours of proposed development should be protected from the harmful effects of pollution arising from the development itself or from previous activities on the site which resulted in contamination. Implementation will require close liaison with the Council's environmental services function and consultation where necessary with the Environment Agency.

Policy SG13 - Pollution and Contamination

Planning permission will only be permitted for development proposals which:

- 1) do not cause unacceptable levels of pollution of the surrounding area by noise, light, toxic or offensive odour, airborne pollutants or by the release of waste products;**
- 2) provide, as necessary, appropriate treatment of land to clean up pollution and contamination.**

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Design And Layout Of New Development

- 3.76

The Council is committed to the promotion of good design which respects the character of the area and maintains local distinctiveness. The character of the built environment is derived from a combination of inter-related factors including the historic distribution of development, the historic layout and form of towns and villages, architectural styles and traditional local materials together with open spaces and landscaping. In considering proposals for new development, the Council will require a high standard of design. The Council is supportive of Parish and Town Councils who wish to undertake Parish Plans and Village Design Statements. These can be useful documents which involve the local community in the planning process and help inform the future development of their village. They may be used in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents. A Strategic Landscape Capacity Study was carried out for the District in 2003. The quality of the landscape of the District is very important and needs to be safeguarded for its own sake. As such the Council will seek to ensure that new development will not result in an unacceptable impact on the character of the landscape.

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- 3.77 New development in settlements should respect their distinctive character including such factors as pattern and layout, plot sizes, distribution of open spaces and the gaps and views between buildings. The proportions of a building and in particular height, scale and massing, together with the elevational treatment and materials all serve to relate the building to its surroundings. Proposals which fail to take account of the character and context of the surrounding area could undermine the quality of the built environment and will not be permitted.
- 3.78 The design and layout of new development, especially large developments, should have regard to the need for it to be adequately served by public transport (particularly buses) and other transport options where the opportunity exists, and by service vehicles including refuse lorries and the emergency services.
- 3.79 New development should be designed to accommodate the needs of people with mobility difficulties and should include energy efficiency measures. High quality, innovative design will be appropriate in some contexts but such proposals should in their space, height and bulk be sympathetic to the streetscape and wider townscape. Modern interpretations of traditional design elements will be encouraged.
- 3.80 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires all local authorities to examine their functions with due regard to their likely effect on crime and disorder and PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' stresses the need to plan for safe and sustainable communities. New development should include measures to design out crime and to design in community safety.

Policy SG14 - Design and Layout of New Development

New development should be designed to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of its surroundings. It should normally respect the vernacular architecture of the area in which it is located although high quality contemporary design will be supported in appropriate contexts. In assessing the design and layout of new development the following matters will be taken into consideration:-

- 1) local distinctiveness;**
- 2) the choice of materials;**
- 3) the historic pattern of development in the locality;**
- 4) the relationship of the development to the character, form and scale of existing buildings nearby;**
- 5) the scale, form and height of the proposed development;**

- 6) architectural detailing;
- 7) the effect of the development on the amenity of nearby residents in terms of noise, smell, general disturbance, overlooking and loss of light;
- 8) planting and measures to promote biodiversity;
- 9) the layout of vehicular access, parking and manoeuvring facilities and the provision of facilities for cyclists and pedestrians;
- 10) the needs of disabled persons;
- 11) the use of sustainable materials and methods of construction;
- 12) measures to reduce the potential for crime and disorder.

Development that would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the locality, or which would prejudice the comprehensive development or redevelopment of an area, will not be permitted.

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New Development: Facilities For Road Users, Pedestrians And Cyclists.

- 3.81 The layout of roads and footpaths within a new development, and the means of access onto the road and footpath network must meet safety and functional requirements. We will be advised by the County Council as to whether proposals are satisfactory. The "Lincolnshire Design Guide for Residential Areas" together with the recent County Council publication "Development Guide on the Transport and New Development Issues In Lincolnshire" will be used as a guide to what are appropriate standards. Regard shall be had to the opportunities for the development to be served by public transport (particularly buses), to the requirements of cyclists and pedestrians, and to the needs of disabled people and people with a child in a pram or pushchair.
- 3.82 The design of roads and footpaths shall be complementary to the design of the buildings and landscape features of a development, and shall not detract from the established character of the wider area.

Policy SG15 - New Development: Facilities For Road Users, Pedestrians And Cyclists

Proposals for development shall provide safe and convenient access to and within the site for motor vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, the less able-bodied and people with disabilities to accommodate the potential increase in movement generated by the proposal. New and improved roads, cycleways and footpaths shall reflect through layout and design the anticipated nature of future traffic and the character of areas to be served.

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Parking Standards In New Development

- 3.83 Car parking is an important element of the transport system. It is widely acknowledged that the availability of car parking has a significant influence on an individual's decision on whether or not to drive to their destination, even for locations well served by public transport.

- 3.90 New development can cause disturbance to existing nearby residents and result in a significant reduction in the quality of their residential amenity. It is considered essential to protect existing residents from intrusive or disturbing development.

Policy SG17 - Protection of Residential Amenity

Planning permission will be granted for development which would not cause material harm to residential amenity.

In considering proposals the following criteria will be taken into account:-

- 1) the extent of any overlooking or loss of privacy;**
- 2) the extent of any overbearing or overshadowing effect;**
- 3) potential noise nuisance including that associated with vehicular activity;**
- 4) the levels of smell, emissions and pollutants.**

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Landscaping Of New Development

- 3.91 Good quality landscaping can significantly improve the appearance of a development and increase the level of amenity that it offers including the maintenance and creation of wildlife habitats. It can also be effectively used to reduce the visual impact of the sometimes necessarily unsightly parts of developments. All too often landscaping has been largely ignored or added as an afterthought resulting in poor standards.

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- 3.92 The landscape on the fringes of the built-up areas of settlements is, in many cases, of strategic importance to the character of the area and to its perception and appreciation by residents and visitors. It is seen as a major asset and resource for the attraction of the District as a place to live and for attracting investment in economic development. Maintaining and improving that resource through landscaping of any new development in these areas is considered essential.
- 3.93 PPS 1 "Delivering Sustainable Development" clearly acknowledges the important contribution that landscaping can make to the creation of a high quality well designed environment.

Policy SG18 - Landscaping of New Development

Proposals for new development should, where appropriate, incorporate landscaping proposals as an integral part of their design and layout and a landscaping strategy will be required to support all major development proposals. Particular attention will be paid to:-

- 1) the protection of any existing trees and hedgerows, and any other attractive landscape features;**
- 2) the provision of strategic tree planting of indigenous species to improve the setting of development within the wider landscape;**
- 3) the maintenance and establishment of wildlife habitats and corridors.**

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Protection Of Open Spaces

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